

## FIFTY YEARS AGO ...

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The establishment of a uniform system of buoyage was, for many years, a subject of concern for Maritime Authorities of all countries.

This concern, which, several years later, would result in the adoption of the IALA system all over the world, was expressed by the International Hydrographic Bureau, in an article of the *IH Review* of 1945. This article was written by the President of the Directing Committee, Vice Admiral NARES and the Bureau's Secretary General, Cdr. BENCKER and listed actions taken from 1880 to 1945 directed to the establishment of such a uniform system of buoyage.

A summarised list is given below:

### "UNIFORMITY IN BUOYAGE

by Vice Admiral J.N. NARES and Commander H. BENCKER,  
*President and Technical Assistant, International Hydrographic Bureau*

In 1882-1883: An *Inter-Departmental Conference for Great Britain and Ireland* arranged by the Corporation of Trinity House was held in London and amongst other propositions the General Lighthouse Authorities adopted the following: Starboard Hand buoys shall always be conical and painted one colour only.

In 1888, the *Second Conference of Maritime Countries of the North* met in Copenhagen and studied a proposal put before them by Mr. PHILLIPSON. This however was mainly a Cardinal system of Channel marking.

In 1889, an *International Marine Conference* was held in Washington, USA. The French and American Governments officially adopted the proposals of this Conference in 1890 and Spain put this recommendation into effect in 1907.

In 1912, an *International Maritime Conference* was held at St. Petersburg and adopted the same system as the Washington Conference of 1889 but reversed the colour of the channel buoys.

In 1913, the *XIIIth International Congress of Navigation* was held in London and considered many proposals for buoyage systems but no definite action was taken.

In 1924, the Section of the Communications and Transit of the League of Nations arranged a Meeting of its *Sub-Committee of Ports and Maritime Navigation* in London at which, among many other subjects, the question of Uniformity of Buoyage was taken up and it was decided to form a *Special Technical Committee for Buoyage and Lighting of Coasts*.

In 1925, this Special technical Committee held its 2nd Meeting at Monaco, the International Hydrographic Bureau being represented by one of its Directors and a Technical Assistant.

In 1926, a Sub-Committee established by the 1925 Committee met in Paris, the International Hydrographic Bureau again being represented by one of the Directors. This Committee studied the question of the Unification of Coastal Signals but not Buoyage.

In 1926, the *Technical Committee for Buoyage and Coast Lighting* held its 3rd Session at Stockholm. A general Report on the Provisions agreed to for Unification, with an annex setting out the various Regulations suggested by them was issued.

In 1929, the League of Nations *Technical Committee for Buoyage and Lighting of Coasts* met in Genoa from 8th to 15th February. The Directors of Lighthouse and Buoyage Services of the following countries were represented: Chile, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and USA. A representation of the International Hydrographic Bureau also attended.

In 1929, an *International Conference of Lighthouses and Maritime Signals* was held in London from 8th to 12th July but the subject of Unification of Buoyage was not officially on the Agenda.

In 1930, the League of Nations held a *Conference on the Unification of Buoyage and Coast Lighting* from 6th to 23rd October at Lisbon.

Certain International Organisations, among which was the International Hydrographic Bureau, took part in an advisory capacity.

The results of the Conference were that it was not found possible to establish rules concerning buoyage which could be universally accepted. It was decided however that further efforts should be made to secure agreement between all the Maritime Nations rather than accept immediate agreement between certain of them only. The League Assembly in 1931 however expressed the desire that a new Conference for the Unification of Buoyage and Lighting of Coasts should not be convened until it had been ascertained that it was likely to be fully successful.

In 1933: A Preparatory Committee of the 2nd International Conference for Unification of Buoyage and Coast Lighting met in Paris in June, and the following month in London when "Draft Rules for the Unification of Buoyage" with a draft Agreement and annexed Regulations were drawn up for communication to the various Governments, asking for any comments and whether they would be prepared to conclude an agreement on the basis of these Proposals. The result showed that the situation was approximately the same as at the time of the Lisbon Conference of 1931.

In 1936, this Committee of Experts met in London and drew up the text for a new Agreement.

A Protocol of Signatures was opened at Geneva on 1st May 1936.

This was ratified by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on 23rd February 1938 with the stipulation that the acceptance was conditional on the application of the System by Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

On 30th April 1945, the French Lighthouse Authorities adopted a new system of Buoyage which was in close conformity with the League of Nations Technical Committee's Proposals of 1936."

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